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ABSTRACT

Both the more traditional and the emerging competency (performance) based training programs for administrators continue to overlook the rich, informal learning that occurs both before and after formal professional training. The author takes issue with Thomas Brown's model, "Interrelating Inservice Education to Preparation Programs," on these grounds. He argues that preservice and renewal training programs should not ignore what teachers and administrators have gleaned from on-the-job experience. (Author)

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# ON-THE-JOB LEARNING AND ADMINISTRATIVE PERFORMANCE: A RESPONSE TO BROWN'S MODEL

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The February 1976 issue included an article by Thomas Brown entitled "Interrelating Inservice Education to Preparation Programs." The comments which follow attempt to build upon his observations by highlighting two "misconceptions" implicit in the University/School Organization Corollary Competencies Model he proposed (Figure 1). Figure 2 reflects an altered configuration of the sequential learning experiences which Brown suggests are common in the training of administrators. Two of the points at which our views differ concern (1) the experiential period prior to entering a formal administrator training program and (2) the integrating/renewal period following the formal university program termination point. (An assumption implicit in Brown's Model, and I believe it is erroneous although I do not address it here, is that most graduate students are engaged in full-time rather than part-time study.) While it has been argued elsewhere that shifting the focus and the locus of preparation programs from university to field and theory to practice will not result in the expected increase in competency among educational administrators,[1] that is not my focus here. Rather, it is to point out that both the more traditional and the emerging competency-based training programs continue to overlook the rich informal learning which occurs both before and after formal administrator training. In doing so, training and renewal programs are designed and operated in a manner which ignores what individuals may have learned informally through their initial on-the-job experiences as a teacher, and later as a result of their experience in the administrative role. Pre-service and renewal training programs which ignore what teachers and administrators have gleaned from these organizational experiences will surely be less effective than more informed programs.

As Figure 2 suggests, the renewal period and the experiential periods (those just before and after formal university training in educational administration) are broadening learning situations, rather than narrow or static. In Figure 1, there is an implicit assumption that the transition from the experiential period to the formal training period is broadening. I would argue that this runs counter to the conception of most students who are likely to view this transition as a rather limiting, perhaps even stifling, period in their lives. While it can be argued that advanced training ought to be of a broadening and more general nature, the history of professional training in Schools of Education is that it has become increasingly specialized in most fields, including educational administration. Thus, as I have tried to depict in Figure 2, the transition to formal training programs amounts to a focusing, a narrowing down from the "blooming buzzing confusion" of the teachers' and administrators' work-world.

The opposite is true upon leaving the formal university training program. The renewal period is not static as is suggested by Figure 1. Rather, as in Figure 2, it is once again an opportunity for individuals to broaden the scope of their experience beyond the specialized and protected confines of inquiry characteristic of the university program. Indeed, this has already been alluded to in Brown's model when he suggests in Figure 1 the broadening effect of university/school organization reality-oriented cooperative efforts. However, the broadening (acquiring corollary competencies) does not stop upon completion of the cooperative, field-based training experience. Instead, as one



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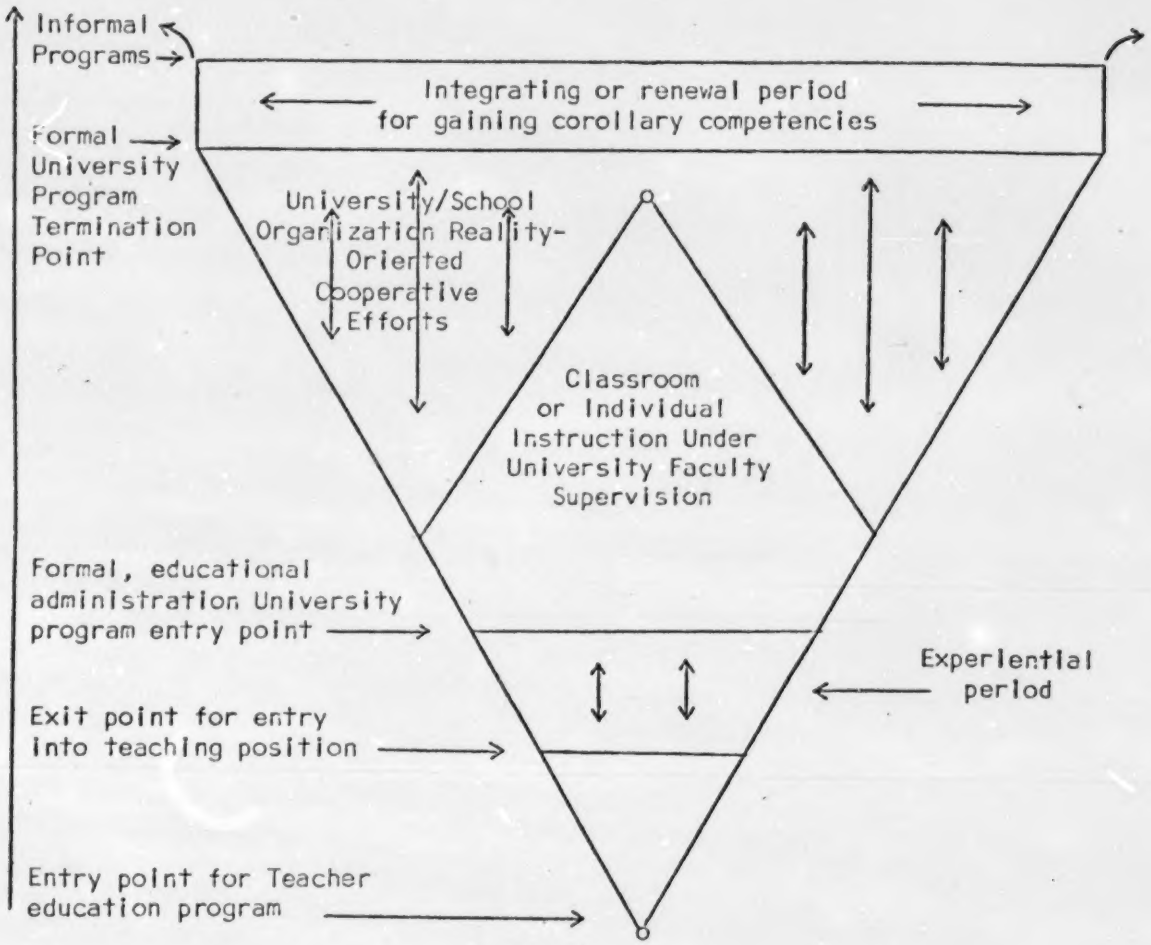
FIGURE I

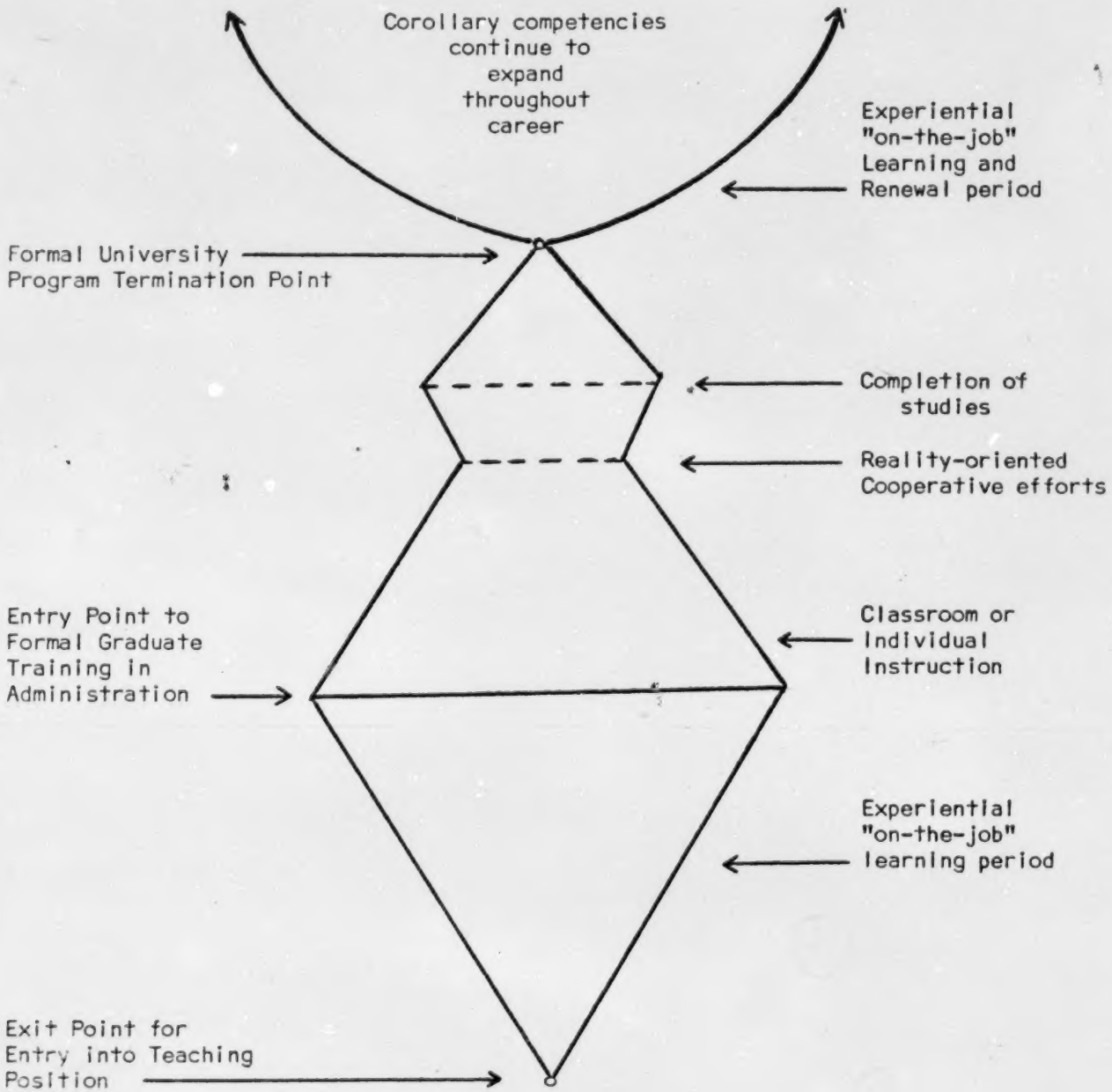
UNIVERSITY/SCHOOL ORGANIZATION
COROLLARY COMPETENCIES MODEL


Informal Programs
Integrating or renewal period for gaining corollary competencies
Formal University Program Termination Point
University/School Organization Reality-Oriented Cooperative Efforts
Classroom or Individual Instruction Under University Faculty Supervision
Formal, educational administration University program entry point
Experiential period
Exit point for entry into teaching position
Entry point for Teacher education program

SOURCE: Thomas Brown, "Inter-relating In-service Education to Preparation Programs" CCBC Notebook (No. 2, Vol. 5, February, 1976) p. 9.

FIGURE 2

ON-THE-JOB LEARNING AND
GRADUATE TRAINING IN ADMINISTRATION


Corollary competencies continue to expand throughout career
Experiential "on-the-job" Learning and Renewal period
Formal University Program Termination Point
Completion of studies
Reality-oriented Cooperative efforts
Entry Point to Formal Graduate Training in Administration
Classroom or Individual Instruction
Experiential "on-the-job" learning period
Exit Point for Entry into Teaching Position

engages the world of work, one probably continues to learn and broaden one's practice base as long as one is active in that setting. Things do not remain constant. Rather, as is suggested by Figure 2, individuals and the reality they engage are in continuous flux.

While these may seem like only minor criticisms related to the "cosmetics" of constructing a figure one way or another (Figure 1 versus Figure 2), they evolve instead out of concern that we make an error in the way we think of the professional training of school administrators.

Administrator training programs, and those designed upon a performance/competency-based model are no exception, pay little if any attention to the informal learning experiences which occur both before and after formal university training. The social science literature[2] is replete with research about the informal learning which occurs on the job as a result of processes like anticipatory[3] and organizational[4] socialization. Proponents of performance competency-based professional training programs would do well to familiarize themselves with what is knownabout these and related phenomena concerning the socialization of adults in complex organizational settings.[5]

Notes

1. William D. Greenfield, Jr. "Organizational Socialization and the Preparation of Educational Administrators." UCEA Review (July, 1975), pp. 21-25.

2. See, for example, David A. Goslin, editor, Handbook of Socialization Theory and Research. Chicago, Rand McNally, 1969.

3. Robert K. Merton, Social Theory and Social Structure, 3rd ed. New York, The Free Press, 1968.

4. Edgar H. Schein "The Individual, the Organization and the Career: A Conceptual Scheme" Psychology: A Book of Readings edited by David A. Klob, Irwin M. Rubin, and James M. McIntyre. Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1974, pp. 333-348.

5. Orville G. Brim, Jr. and Stanton Wheeler, Socialization After Childhood: Two Essays. New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1969.

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